1776-1926

1745—1926

FIRST REFORMED CHURCH

EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

PROGRAM

OF THE

SESQUI-CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEDICATION

AND THE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FIRST OF THE FOUNDING

OF THE

First Reformed Church of Easton, Pennsylvania

NOVEMBER FOURTEENTH TO TWENTY-FIRST, NINETEEN HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX

SUNDAY THE FOURTEENTH

10.45 A. M.---THE REV. HENRY MARTYN KIEFFER, D. D.

7.30 P. M.--- THE REV. JOHN CALVIN BOWMAN, D. D.

WEDNESDAY THE SEVENTEENTH AT 7.45 P. M.

HISTORICAL ADDRESS BY THE REV. GEORGE WARREN RICHARDS, D.D., LL.D.

FRIDAY THE NINETEENTH AT 7.45 P. M.

FELLOWSHIP SERVICE---ADDRESS BY THE REV. F. K. FRETZ, D.D., PH.D.

GREETINGS BY THE REFORMED MINISTERS OF THE CITY

SUNDAY THE TWENTY-FIRST

10.45 A. M.---THE REV. PAUL SEIBERT LEINBACH, D.D., LITT.D.

7.30 P. M.---THE REV. EDWARD F. EVEMEYER

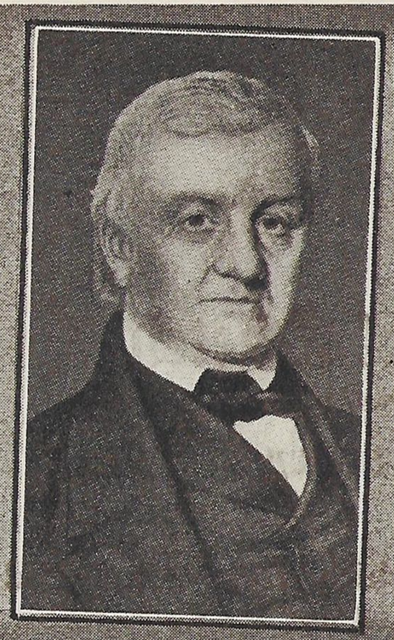
Pastoral History

1745–1749—John Conrad Wirtz
1749–1750—..... Lohrspach
1750–1756—Jacob Riess
1756–1762—John Egidius Hecker
1763 (Mar. to Sept.)—Caspar Diedrich Weyberg
1766 (Feb.)–1769 (Oct.)—Frederick Ludwig Henop
1769 (Nov.)–1772 (July)—John William Pythan
*1775 (Feb.)—John Conrad Steiner, Jr.
*1775 (Mar.) to 1776 (Jan.)—Lebrecht Frederick Hermann, D.D.
1776 (Aug.) to 1780 (Sept.—John William Ingold
*1781 (Mar. to Oct.)—Lebrecht Frederick Hermann, D. D.
1781 (Nov.)–1786 (Mar.)—John William Ingold
1787 (Jan.)–1790 (Nov.)—Lebrecht Frederick Hermann, D.D.
1793 (Apr.)–1796 (Mar.)—Christian Ludwig Becker, D.D.
1796 (July)–1850—Thomas Pomp
1833–1844—Bernard C. Wolff, D.D., Assistant
1845–1850—J. H. A. Bomberger, D.D., Assistant
1850–1854—J. H. A. Bomberger, D.D., Pastor
1854–1877—John Beck, D.D.
1877–1884—Thomas C. Porter, D.D., LL.D.
1884–1903—Henry Martyn Kieffer, D.D.
*1903–1904—John Calvin Bowman, D.D.
1904–1913—Paul Seibert Leinbach, D.D., Litt.D.
1913–1921—Edward F. Evemeyer
1921–1929 John N. LeVan D.D.
1929-1931 CHAS. H. ROMINGER, SUPPLY.
1931— GEO. A. CREITZ

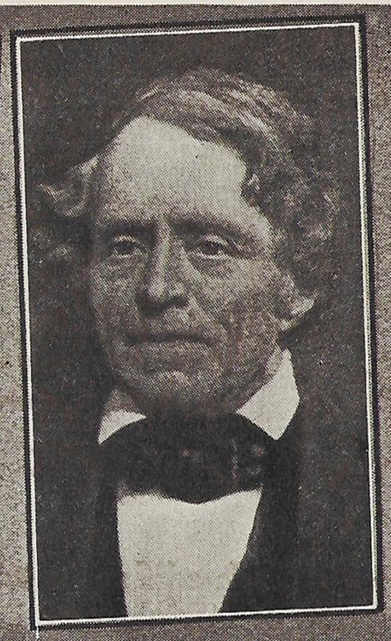
*Supply

Caspar Diedrich Weyberg

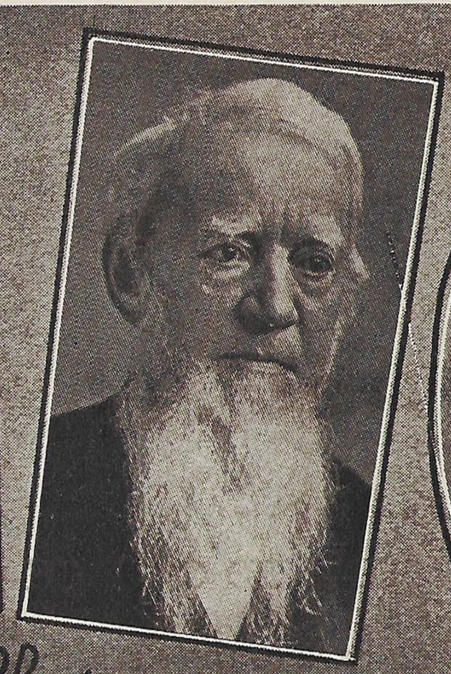
Lebrecht Fredrich Hermann, D.D.



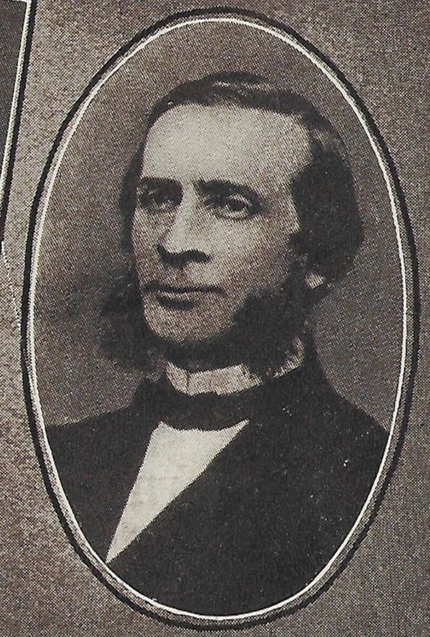
Thomas Pomp



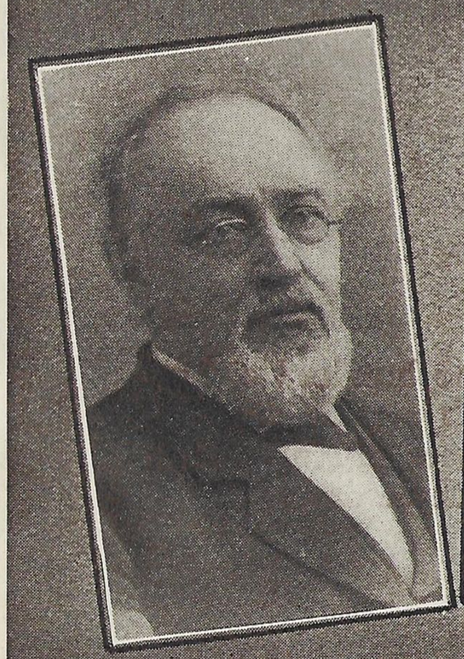
Bernard C. Wolff D.D



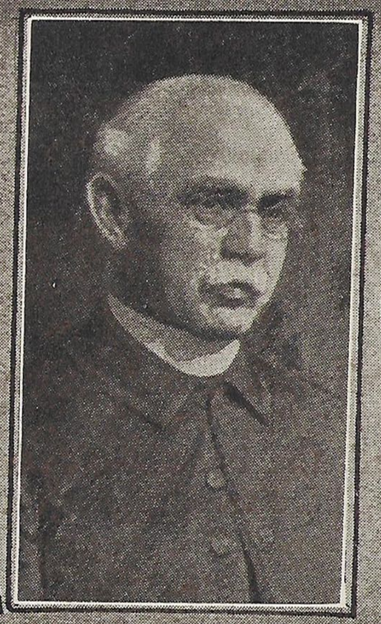
John H. A. Bomberger D.D.



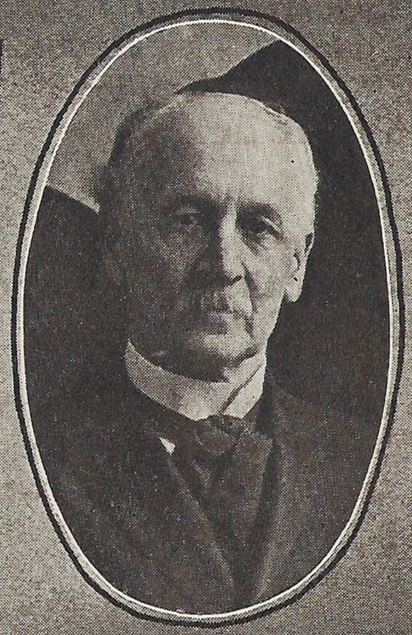
John Beck D.D.



Thomas C. Porter D.D.

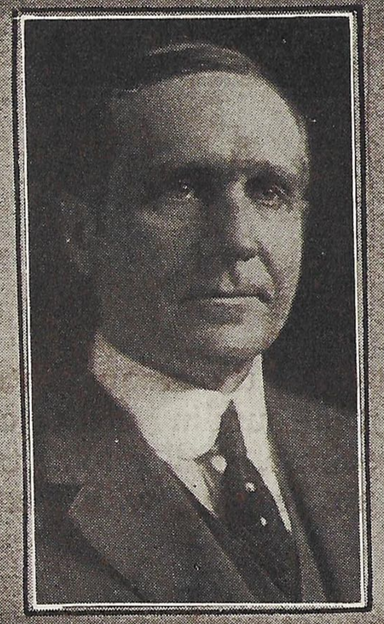


Henry M. Kieffer D.D.

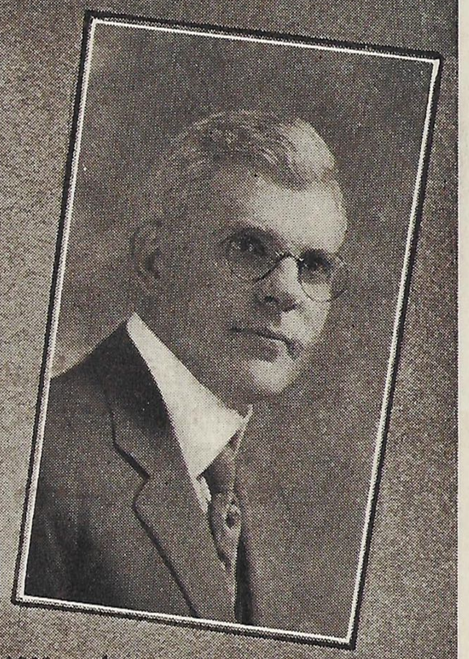


John C. Bowman D.D.

Paul Seibert Leinbach D.D.



Edward F. Evemeyer



John N. LeVan

Historical Sketch

BY J. N. LEVAN, MINISTER

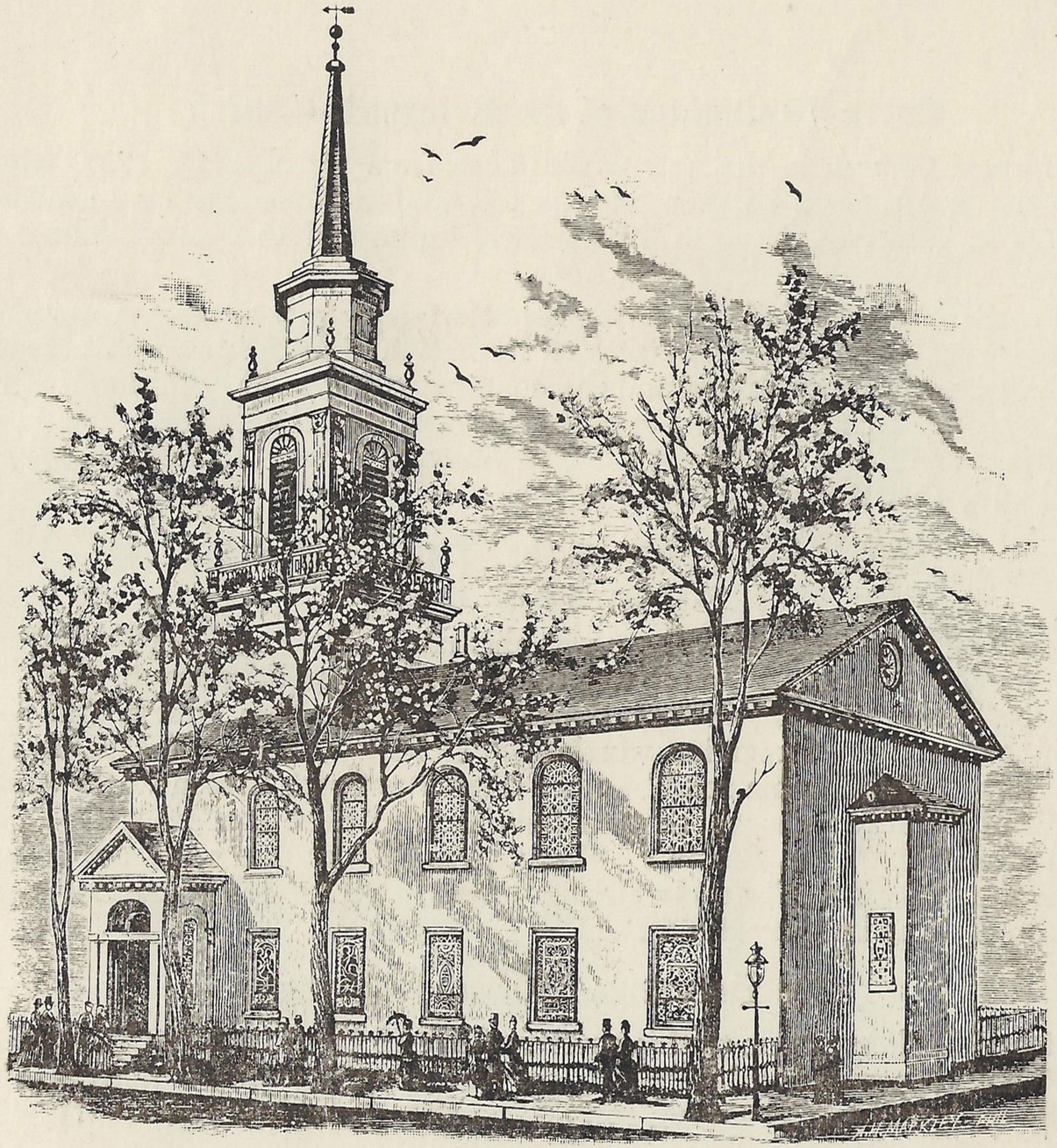
Introductory

THE FIRST REFORMED CHURCH—a **church-edifice** in which, for one hundred fifty years, the faithful have worshipped the one true God, spanning the entire period of our nation's history; a **congregation** with a history of one hundred eighty-one years, extending back to the stern, rugged days of colonial pioneering—what themes for the historian, and what inspiration to those who would be worthy sons of noble sires!

"What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas? The spoils of war?
They sought a faith's pure shrine."

"Aye, call it holy ground,
The ground whereon they trod:
They left unstained what there they found,
Freedom to worship God."

The celebration of the sesqui-centennial anniversary of the dedication of the church-edifice, and the one hundred eighty-first anniversary of the founding of the congregation, with the brief, and necessarily incomplete, history which can be given in this anniversary brochure, shall render tribute to the memory of those who built so well, the harvest of whose sowing—often sown in tears—we are reaping, with plenty at our doors in these piping times of peace. There were giants in those days!



50 YEARS AGO—A TOUCH OF THE PAST—1876

Early Beginnings of the Reformed Church

The beginning of the Reformed Church in the new world dates from October 15, 1725, when John Philip Boehm celebrated the holy communion for the first time at Falkner Swamp, followed in November by a similar service at Schippack, and a third service on December 23, 1725 at Whitemarsh, all in Montgomery county of this state. These three services are called by Boehm himself "the first beginning".

Tho sparsely settled at an earlier date, the full tide of immigration swept into the region now Northampton county (then a part of Bucks county) about the year 1740, and the first traces of Reformed church life in this region appear at Springfield, at Tohickon and at the Forks of the Delaware (now Easton and the contiguous territory). During the fifth decade of the eighteenth century (1740-1750) many new Reformed congregations appeared in eastern Pennsylvania. The largest number of new congregations appeared in 1745, and all are associated with John Conrad Wirtz, who was the first pastor of the First Reformed Church, now of Easton, and who served beside this, five other congregations.

The Beginning of the First Church

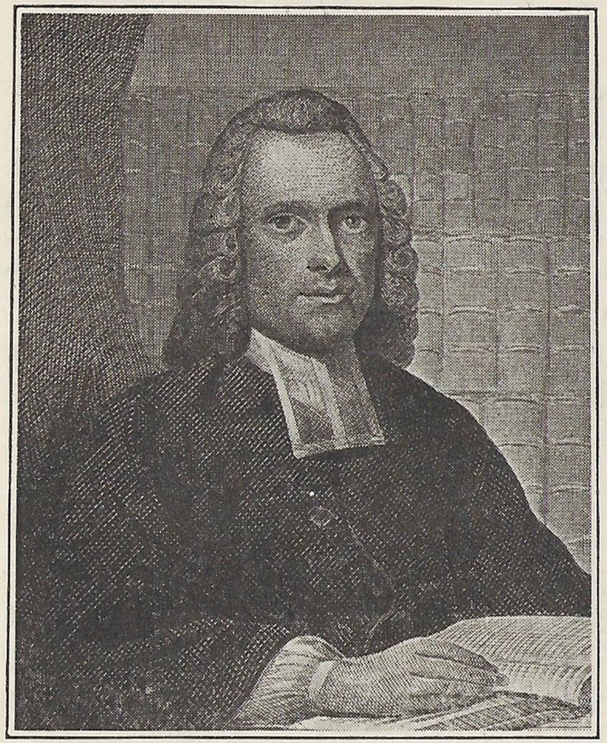
"The Church at the Forks"

It is a query, often asked and of much interest, Where was this congregation of the Forks? Until recently this question remained unanswered. In the "Weekly Messenger", as it was then called, dated February 8, 1837, there has been found an important article on the history of the Easton Church, written, doubtlessly by the then pastor, the Reverend Thomas Pomp. It states: "the first church in which the Easton congregation worshipped stood at the foot of Morgan Hill, about a mile and a half from town, a little to the left of the old Philadelphia road",—near where the South Easton water works are located. It is interesting, also, to note from the records of Tohickon church, that on the Sunday before Pentecost, 1757, a class of catechumens, numbering eleven, was confirmed at the Forks "**near** Easton". This proves that, at that time, the Forks church was not within the town limits of Easton; and from the "Messenger" article already quoted, we further learn that a new church was built at the Forks during the pastorate of John Egidius Hecker (1756-1762).

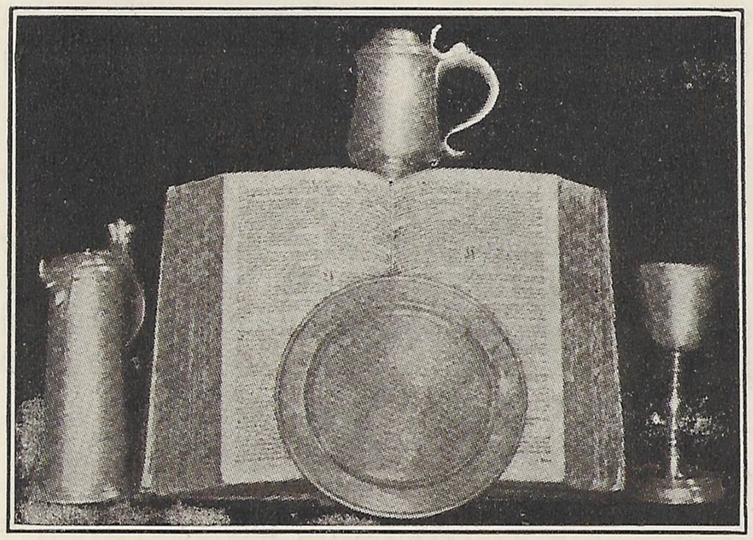
The Reverend Michael Schlatter

In 1746 the Reverend Michael Schlatter came to this country from Holland to visit the scattered people of the Reformed faith in the provinces of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. In his "appeal" to the Synods of North and South Holland, he states that he travelled 8000 miles on horseback in visiting forty-seven scattered congregations. He visited this congregation about June 30, 1747, and reports that "these are without a shepherd".

Moved by the condition of the congregations visited, as he says, "deplorable and worthy of our sympathy", Schlatter, in 1751, returns to Holland to appeal for aid and assistance for the Pennsylvania churches. His work in the colonies is commended, and he is commissioned to go to Germany and Switzerland to find suitable ministers for the American churches, and the deputies of the Synod are instructed to raise a charity fund.



THE REVEREND MICHAEL SCHLATTER
Born in St. Gall, Switzerland, October 8, 1685
Died July 11, 1748



SCHLATTER BIBLE AND PEWTER COMMUNION SET
The Pewter Communion Service bearing date, 1746

ILLUMINATED FLY-LEAF OF BIBLE
Presented to this Church by
The Rev. Michael Schlatter, 1752

The Schlatter Bible

Schlatter returned to America, accompanied by a band of six new ministers, and bringing a considerable amount of money for the establishment of churches and schools, together with a number of Bibles. One of these Bibles is in our possession, in an excellent state of preservation, the quaintly illuminated fly-leaf, retaining all the brightness of its colors. Another treasured possession of this congregation is the old pewter communion set, bearing the date, 1746.

Removal to Easton

The Lutheran congregation (now Saint John's) and the Reformed congregation, having worshipped together for many years in the old union church at the foot of Morgan Hill, felt the need of a larger and more adequate place of worship within the limits of the growing town of Easton, so named by Thomas Penn.

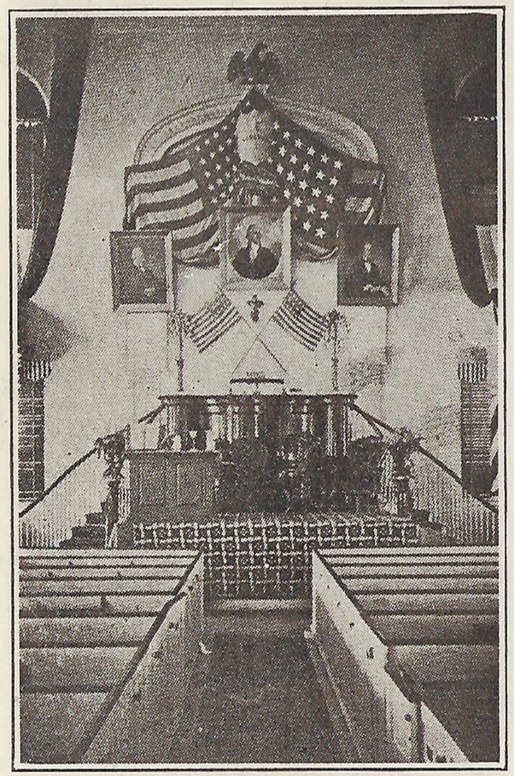
The Land Grant of the Penns

Honorable John Penn, of Stoke Pogeis, in the county of Bucks, in the Kingdom of Great Britain, and Honorable Richard Penn, of Queen Anne Street West, in the Parish of St. Mary Le Bone, in the County of Middlesex, in the Kingdom of Great Britain, who were descendants and heirs of William Penn, and proprietaries of Pennsylvania, donated to the two congregations, for the nominal sum of ten dollars, three parcels of ground, on one of which our church-building stands. This grant was confirmed and conveyed, by deed, to the trustees of the two congregations on November 27, 1800—the original deed in excellent preservation being in the archives of this congregation.

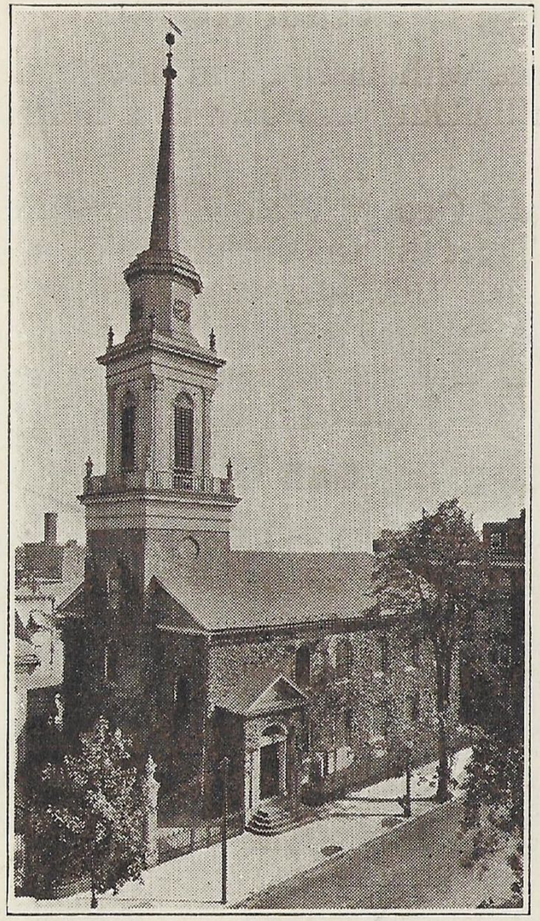
The Church is Erected

"Articles of agreement" were drawn on the nineteenth day of March, 1774, as follows: "that the members of both congregations do agree to build a church together jointly for the use of said congregations in Easton aforesaid upon the two lots where the German school house now stands." Plans were immediately formulated for the erection of the church edifice, the sesquicentennial anniversary of whose dedication we now celebrate, and in which generations of the faithful have had broken to them the Bread of Life.

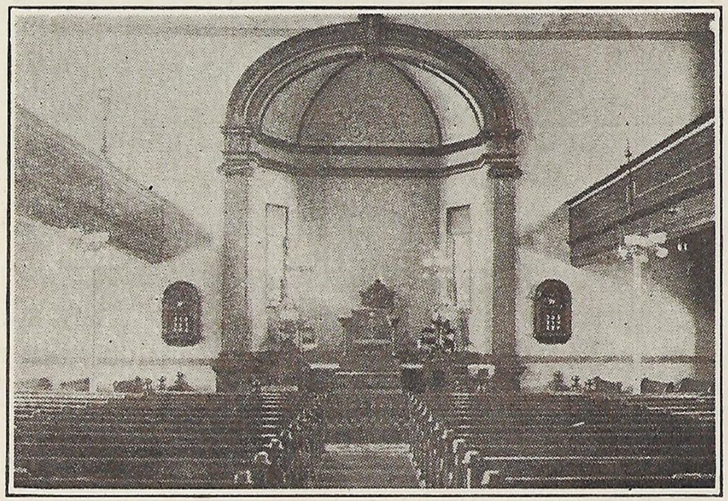
The cornerstone was laid with appropriate ceremonies on June 8, 1775, and the church was solemnly dedicated to the worship of the triune God on November 17, 1776. From the records we learn that, on the Saturday following the dedication of the church, November 23, 1776, a class of catechumens numbering twenty-six, was confirmed.



INTERIOR OF CHURCH, 1876
At the Centennial Anniversary



EXTERIOR OF CHURCH, 1926
(As rebuilt in 1832)



INTERIOR OF CHURCH, 1902

Interesting Historical Events

The worship of the congregations was, however, not without frequent interruptions during the critical period of the Revolution. During this period (1776-1780) the new church building was used as a hospital, and was frequently crowded with sick and wounded soldiers.

On January 20, 1777, Honorables George Taylor and George Walton, commissioners appointed by Congress to be present and preside "at the Indian treaty to be holden at Easton", met the Indians in the church, the chiefs of the following tribes being present—Kayugas, Senecas, Munsies, Nantikokes and Kanois. An interesting incident of this early period was the occasion of the preaching of a thanksgiving sermon on October 17, 1779, by the Reverend Israel Evans, chaplain of the New Hampshire Brigade of the Continental Army, upon the return of the troops of General Sullivan's expedition into the Wyoming Valley. A copy of this sermon is preserved in the archives, and is most interesting and edifying.

Lutheran Congregation Withdraws

The Lutheran and Reformed congregations owned and occupied this church jointly until 1831, when the Lutheran congregation withdrew, selling its interest to the Reformed congregation for $1600, and erected a house of worship on Ferry street of the city.

Church Reconstructed

As soon as the Reformed congregation came into sole possession of the church, steps were taken toward the reconstruction of the building. The steeple and vestibule were erected on the north side of the original building, and the entire building was rough-casted. The building, reconstructed into its present general form, (except the steeple, which was not completed until 1833) at a cost of $25,000, was reconsecrated on Sunday, November 25, 1832.

Manse Erected

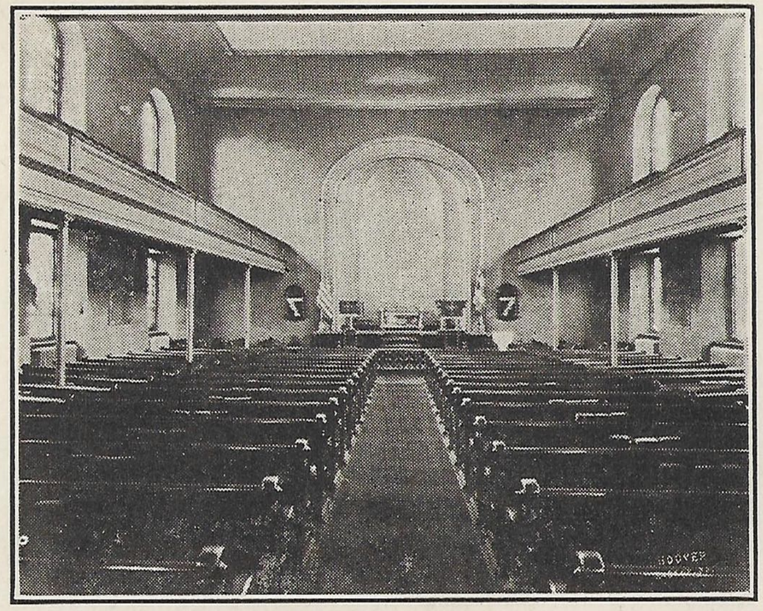
During the fall and winter of 1852-1853, the present manse was built, furnishing a comfortable home for the ministers of the congregation.

Renovations and Improvements

Extensive renovations to the interior of the building, completely changing the appearance of the same, were made in 1885. New pews replaced the "box-pews", the clear glass windows, with "Venetian blinds", were replaced with art-glass windows, the nine on the first floor being placed as memorials to those who had been active in the work of the congregation. The cost of the improvements was $12,000. On Sunday, February 21, 1886, the building was reconsecrated with impressive ceremonies.

The Chimes

In 1902, the chime of nine bells, including the Centennial bell, placed in the tower at the celebration of the centennial in 1876, was installed and their sweet tones continue to call us to worship.



INTERIOR OF CHURCH, 1926

THE CONSISTORY, 1926

Later Improvements

In 1906 the interior of the church was again renovated, redecorated, and new furnishings provided, the present organ, the fourth placed in the old church, being installed at this time. The service of reconsecration was held on Sunday, November 11, 1906. In 1916, the four-dial belfry clock was presented to the congregation by the children of Dr. John Jacob and Arabella (Knecht) Detwiller, as a loving memorial to their parents. It was dedicated on Sunday, June 3, 1916, at noon. In 1922 a brick garage was erected on Sitgreaves Street for the use of the minister of the church. In 1924, extensive improvements were made to the various properties of the church, including the remodeling of the sexton's house, and the placing of new carpet and upholstery in the church. The present membership of the congregation is 1075, and the contributions during the last classical year were—for benevolent purposes $10,457, and for congregational purposes, $20,247.

Our historic church building, whose history spans the whole period of our national history, remains a monument to the steadfastness, loyalty and faith of our forefathers. It stands as a challenge to the present generation, to a loyalty, faith and service commensurate with the larger opportunities and responsibilities of the new day.

Our historic congregation, the records of which contain the names of men who contributed largely to the progress and achievement of city, state and nation, is among those pioneer congregations, who contributed so largely to the social, political and religious freedom, which is our rare heritage. True to the motto of the Reformed Church,—"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free",—those, who have gone before us in the way of faith, during the one hundred eighty-one years, have found the "truth as it is in Christ Jesus" and have entered into the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest."

Thus there remains to us a sanctuary, sacred with memories of the past, an inspiration of hope for the future. Its life, like its spire, continues to point men Godward.

A GREAT HERITAGE—A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

First
Reformed Church
FOUNDED 1745
DEDICATED NOV. 17, 1776
Legend
THIS CHURCH WAS ERECTED IN 1776 AND IS THE OLDEST PUBLIC BUILDING IN EASTON. IT WAS USED AS A HOSPITAL DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND WITHIN ITS WALLS IMPORTANT INDIAN TREATIES WERE HELD IN 1777
Sunday Worship
SUNDAY SCHOOL 9.15
MORNING WORSHIP 10.45
EVENING WORSHIP 7.30
AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM
THIS TABLET WAS ERECTED ON THE OCCASION OF THE SESQUI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION NOVEMBER 14-21, 1926
J. N. LE VAN - MINISTER
WELCOME
JNO. WILLIAMS, INC. N.Y.C.
BRONZE SIZE 27" X 48" HIGH OVERALL

SKETCH OF SESQUI CENTENNIAL TABLET
TO BE ERECTED AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE CHURCH.
(Owing to delay, it will be unveiled at a later date)

The Teaching Function of the First Church

An Educational Religion

The genius of the Reformed Church, from the beginning, was such that it was deemed imperative to provide for the religious education of the youth, that they might intelligently give a "reason for the faith that was in them". It is surprising that, in spite of the extreme poverty of the early congregations in America, they maintained church-schools, either in the churches, or, as in the majority of cases, in log cabins erected alongside the churches. A recent survey of the Reformed churches of Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century, shows that at least one hundred, of the approximately one hundred forty congregations in existence in that century, were provided with church schools. It shows that they were not insensible to the advantages of a good education. Indeed they always insisted that it should be a Christian education, for they had not only specially prepared "Reformed ABC books", but they studied also the Heidelberg Catechism, either in its full form, or in one of its numerous abbreviations. It is a significant fact that the one form of Reformed literature, which flourished above any other is the Reformed catechisms. About one hundred twenty editions of Reformed catechisms were published in Pennsylvania from 1742 to 1850. It is an impressive testimony to the extraordinary power which the catechetical system exerted in the Reformed Church.

The Early Schools---Log School House---1755

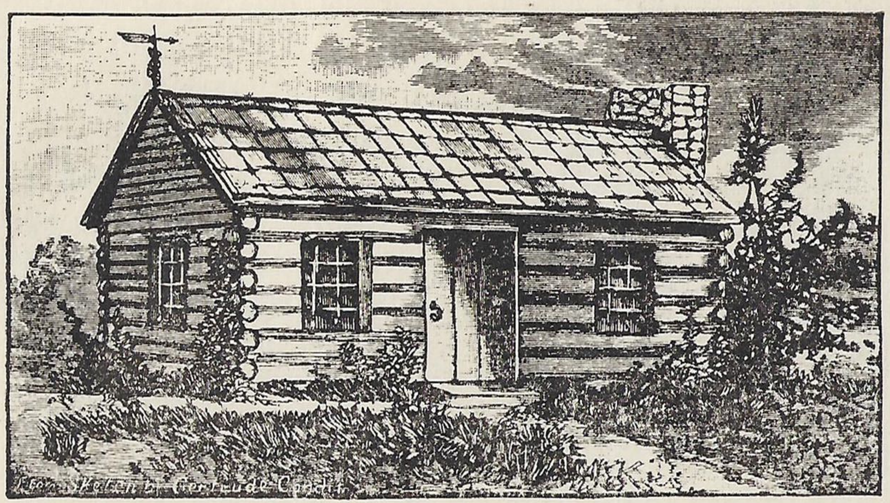
That this same genius manifested itself in the early days of our own congregation is evident from the fact that a school house was built on the present church land as early as 1755. Upon the return of the Reverend Michael Schlatter from Holland in 1752, he brought with him funds which came to be known as the "Schlatter School Fund". In order to make this "fund" available, on July 31, 1755 it was decided to erect a school house. By public subscription, a log building was erected on the lots, reserved by the Penns for religious and educational purposes,—the site of our present church edifice and other buildings. Thus from the beginning of our history, our forefathers were true to the genius of the Reformed Church, as standing for an educational religion.

Stone School House---1778

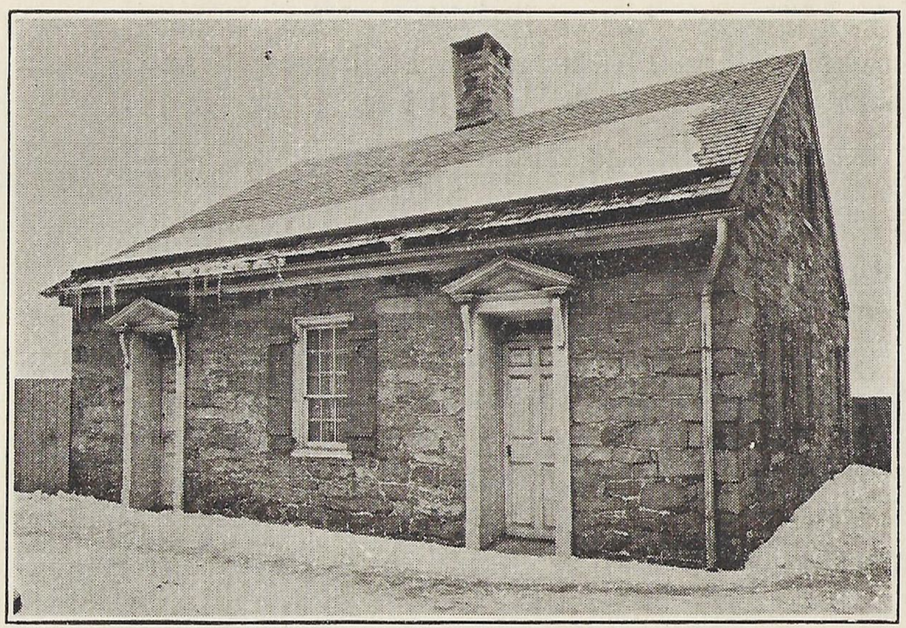
This first school house, a log structure, on the site of the present Church School building, was superseded in 1778 by the stone school house, remaining today, in excellent state of preservation, on the northwest corner of Church and Sitgreaves streets, and used as a depository and museum by the Northampton County Historical Society. There the instruction of the youth continued, under the supervision of pastors and consecrated teachers.

The "Session Room"---1850

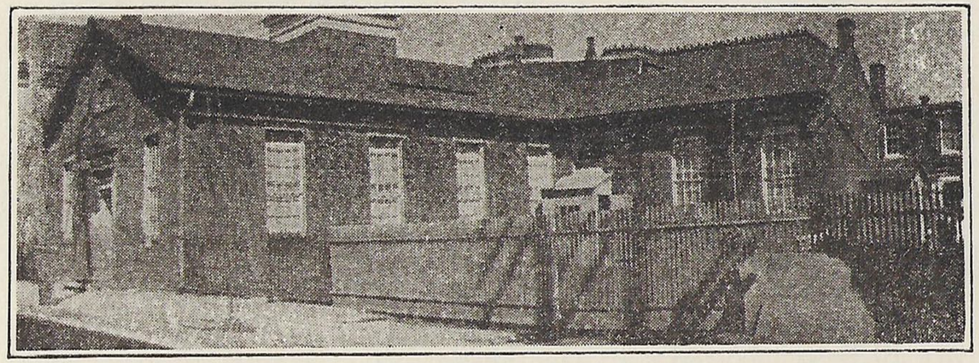
In 1850 the need was felt for a more adequate provision for the instruction of the youth, and, on the site of the present Church School building, was erected the building familiarly known as the "session room". Here, for more than a half century, under faithful pastors, officers and teachers, the expanding programs of education for the youth were undertaken. An addition was later added to provide more adequate facilities for the primary children—the gift of Mrs. Matilda Butz Chidsey, whose name is fondly and inseparably linked with the Christian nurture of the youth of her day.



FIRST SCHOOL HOUSE, ERECTED 1755



STONE SCHOOL HOUSE, ERECTED 1778



THE SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDING, ERECTED 1850
Familiarly known as "The Session Room"

The Present Church School Building

In 1912, "in order to serve the interests and needs of the young people of the congregation", plans were drawn for a modern Church School building. The "session room" was removed, and the present Church School building was erected, with its departmental rooms, office, banquet-hall and gymnasium, vault and kitchen. The pipe-organ with the grand piano in the auditorium, piano in each department, departmental furnishings and adjuncts, afford a complete equipment.

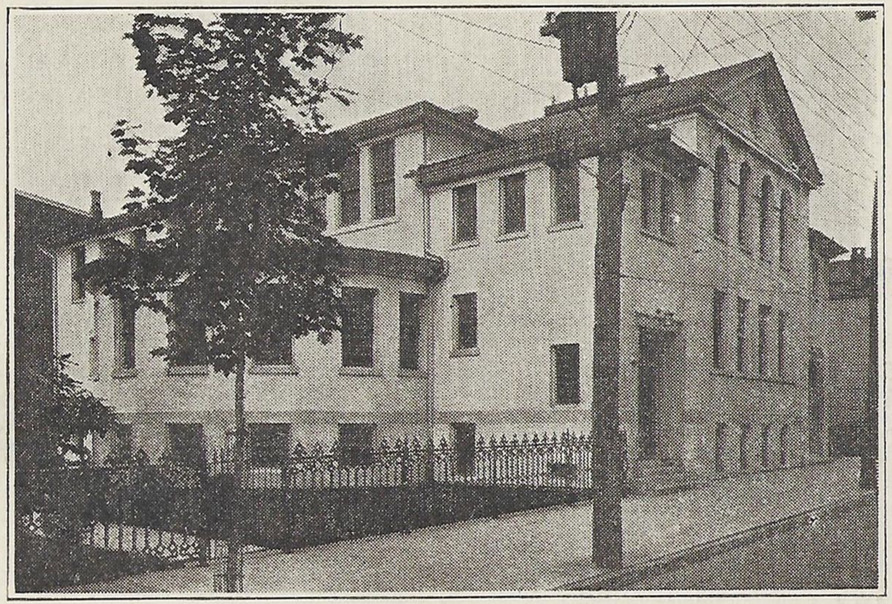
A Unique Record of Faithful Service

It is significant that in the past fifty years, from the centennial in 1876 to the sesqui-centennial in 1926, there have been only three changes in the office of General Superintendent of the Sunday School. The following have served in that capacity—Elder Jacob Rader, 1877-1901; Elder Howard H. Warner, 1901-1916; and the present superintendent, Charles K. Weaver, 1916—. Under the capable and devoted leadership of these men, the school has steadily grown, adopting and administering the ever-advancing program of Christian education. It might be added that, in view of the fact that the Rev. John Beck, D.D., pastor, also served as superintendent of the Sunday School for a period of twenty-two years (1855-1877), there have been but four superintendents of our Sunday School during a period of seventy-one years (1855-1926),—a record of fidelity and loyalty equalled by few servants of God. The present enrollment of the Sunday School is 648.

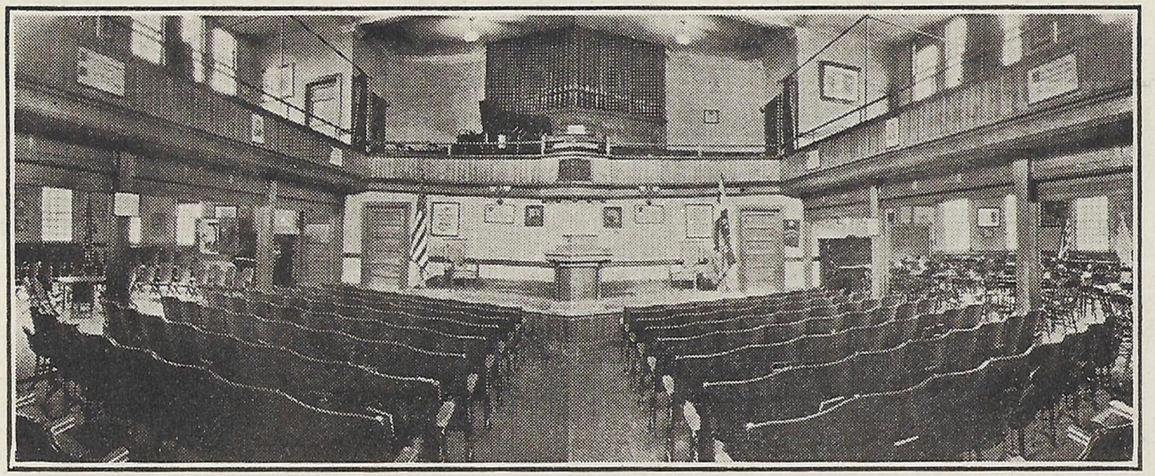
Another admirable and unique service over a long period of years, until death came, was that of Herbert T. Buckley, Esq., Organist. With the highest devotion to the development of the ministry of music in the worship of the sanctuary, he served in the capacity of organist and chorister of the First Church for forty-four years, 1880-1924. "Well done, good and faithful servants."

The Modern Church School Program

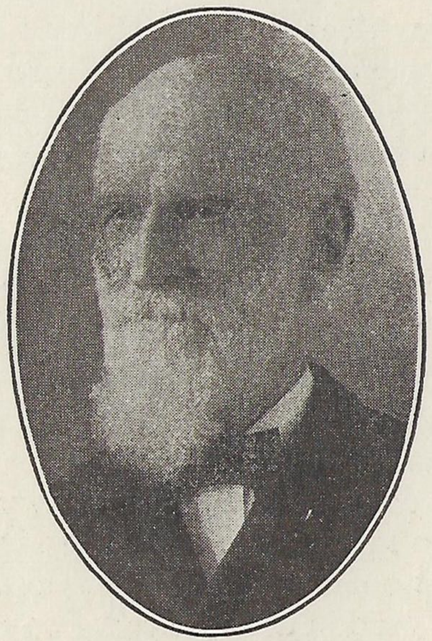
The complete program of the modern Church School has been adopted, and the various departments—the Sunday School, the Daily Vacation Bible School, and the Weekday School of Religious Education—are in operation. Five annual sessions of the Daily Vacation Bible School have been held, making our school the pioneer school of the community. At the present time an experimental Weekday School of Religious Education is being conducted, again leading the way in this most important work of Christian education. A weekday program of supervised Young People's Work is in the fourth year of its program, adding a four-fold Christian program to that of the Boy Ranger and Boy Scout programs for boys, and to the Bluebird and Campfire programs for girls. The Christian Endeavor Society contributes to the young people's program with its development of the devotional life and the qualities of leadership. For the training of intelligent leadership, a number of our young people have been sent to the sessions of the Summer School of Religious Education; and to the same end a large number of our teachers are attending the annual sessions of the Community Training School of the city. The Junior Congregation, organized four years ago, with its regular worship and with an average attendance of more than two hundred, has brought our children within the hearing of preaching of the Word.



CHURCH SCHOOL BUILDING, ERECTED 1912



INTERIOR OF CHURCH SCHOOL BUILDING



ELDER JACOB RADER
(1877-1901)

ELDER HOWARD HELMS WARNER
(1901-1916)

CHARLES K. WEAVER
(1916—)

OUR THREE SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS IN FIFTY YEARS

Thus an earnest effort is made to meet the challenge of the day—the Christian education of our youth—realizing that the boys and girls of today are the men and women of tomorrow, who will wield the destiny of home, church and nation. They will place upon the life of tomorrow the image of either the Corsican, with his selfish, godless ambition, or that of the Galilean—the Christ—with His unselfish service and love.

Auxiliary Organizations

The missionary activity of the congregation has been organized according to the program of the church, and includes the Schlatter Woman's Missionary Society, the Girls' Missionary Guild, and the Mission Band.

The Woman's Guild, with almost one hundred members, is busily engaged in the promotion of its objectives, and is rendering a most valuable contribution to the program of the church.

The Bethany Aid Society and the Female Benevolent Societies—the former, in a systematic way, fostering interest in and rendering a special service to the wards of the church at Bethany Orphans' Home; the latter engaged in ministrations to the needy and suffering of the congregation and community—make a distinct contribution to the benevolent activity of the congregation.

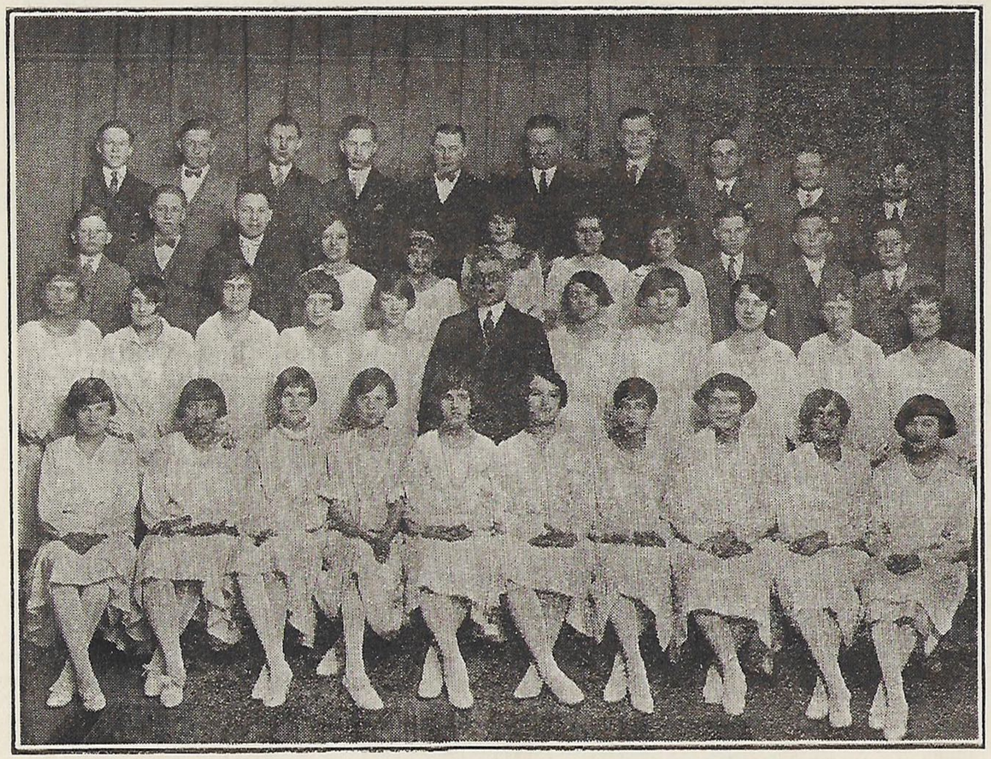
The Matilda Butz Chidsey Circle of the King's Daughters of the First Reformed Church, with more than thirty members, is growing rapidly, and is rendering a splendid service in the regular visitation of the sick and shut-ins, and in the dispensing of charitable aid. As one of the beneficiaries of the Daniel Black estate, the local Circle is about to receive a legacy amounting to approximately $60,000. How sweet and abiding is the memory of those who, acknowledging their stewardship, thus give of their goods to their Lord and His kingdom!

The Men's Club, with approximately three hundred members, has proven to be a valuable auxiliary to the work of the congregation, establishing valuable contacts with men of the community, enlisting men in Kingdom work, and rendering real service to the congregational life.

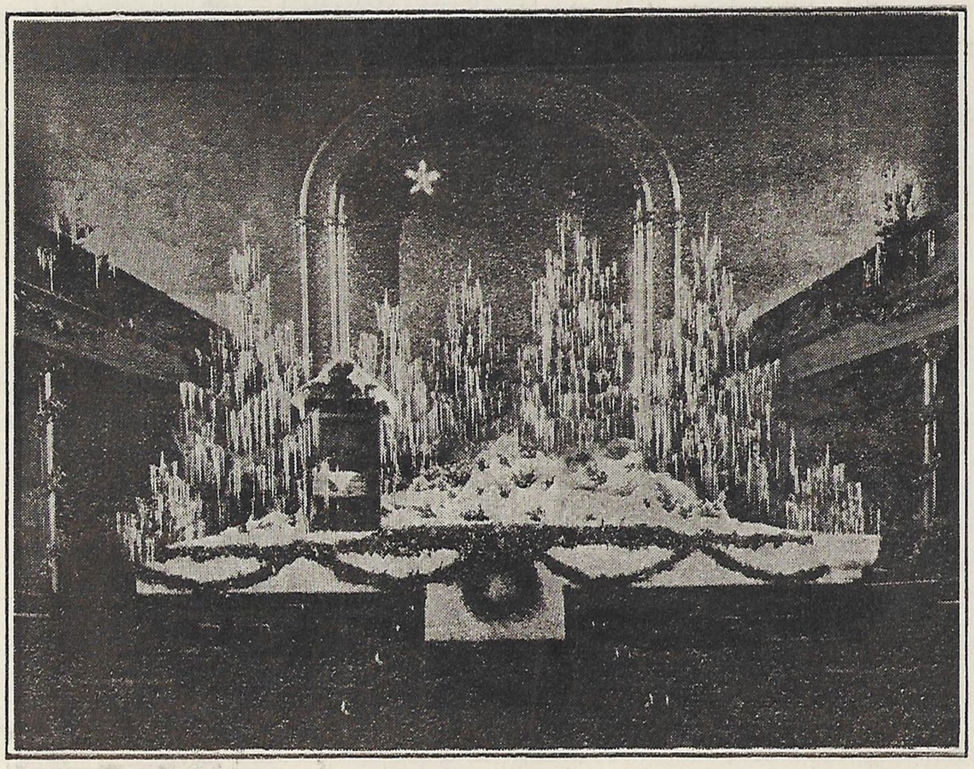
A Last Word

With this brief historical sketch and review of present activity of our church, with the congregational directory which follows, this brochure is sent on its mission—a tribute to the past, and a challenge to the present and future. Farewell to the years gone by, and welcome to the future! Stay by, as our fathers have done. We ask no more, nor hope for less. Look up, and not down, we pray; look out and not in, and lend a hand; and may the God who has been the faithful guide and counsellor in the past and until now, still lift upon us the light of His countenance and bless us.

DAILY VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



CONFIRMATION CLASS, 1926



CHRISTMAS DAY, 1925

Directory

Minister
The Rev. J. N. LeVan, A.B., B.Sc.
The Manse, 29 North Third Street

Elders

W. S. Weaver (Emeritus)
G. A. Laubach
H. G. Siegfried
J. F. Kressly
R. H. Schmickle
F. A. Churchill
Harry Vannatta
D. Frank Baim
C. K. Boltz

Deacons

J. H. Wieghorst
F. H. Laubach
F. G. Brink
H. P. Harrison
E. O. Correll
W. G. Tindall
M. R. Sterner
J. S. Genther

Church Secretary
Harry Vanatta
145 South Sixth Street

Church Treasurer
E. L. Osterstock
1435 Washington Street

Sunday School

C. K. Weaver, Superintendent — Raymond Walter, Secretary
Edgar C. Knerr, Treasurer

Christian Endeavor

Senior—Ralph Achenbach, President

Schlatter Missionary Society
Mrs. F. A. Churchill, President
Miss Lizzie V. Correll, Secretary

Woman's Guild
Mrs. D. F. Baim, President
Mrs. H. P. Harrison, Secretary

Girls' Missionary Guild
Mrs. Stewart P. Lewis, Counsellor

Mission Band
Eleanor Correll, Leader

Bethany Aid Society
Mrs. Sarah Resh, President
Mrs. Charles West, Secretary

Female Benevolent Society
Mrs. Sarah Resh, President
Miss Agnes Bieber, Secretary

King's Daughters
Mrs. G. A. Laubach, President
Miss Helen Osterstock, Secretary

Men's Club
J. N. LeVan, President
F. G. Brink, Secretary

Daily Vacation Bible School—John Cawley, Director

Young People's Supervised Program—M. S. Lippincott, Director

Campfire Girls
Miss Pearl Keller, Guardian

Boy Scouts
Ralph Achenbach, Scoutmaster
Clifford Lewis, Asst. Scoutmaster

Bluebird Girls
Miss Dorothy Sterner, Guardian

Boy Rangers
Raymond F. Gross, G. R. Hillegass, Donald G. Laubach } Guides

Organist and Choirmaster—Charles Maddock

Quartet
Mrs. Harry Pursell, Soprano
Miss Eudora Saeger, Contralto
Edgar Lehr, Tenor
Russell R. Schooley, Baritone

String Orchestra
A. M. Weingartner, Conductor
Mrs. J. N. LeVan, Violin
Miss Edith Lipschitz, Violin
J. E. Swartwood, Violin
A. F. Kahn, Violin
J. Ilyas, Violin
John Detwiller, Viola
Harvey Freeman, Viola
Horace L. Hay, Cello
C. R. Gordon, Cello
F. W. Light, Jr., Bass
Mrs. Calvin Smith, Piano

Sexton—Andrew J. Wheeler, 231 Church Street